



*Councillors inspect Elizabeth Bridge from ferry, 1966*

73.93

#### **c.44.7 – bridges & ferries**

Dant, Cutter ferry history and account of barge traffic – 62 08 03b & c

In 1880-81 Headley and Edwards built an iron bridge over the river near Coe Fen and in 1897-8 the sum of £411 15s was paid for Robinson Crusoe Bridge. But mystery surrounds the name. Leases from 1500 call the site the Swan's Nest which, with the old stock of boats, was sold by auction in 1895. Readers recall there was previously a ferry boat. Mr Edward Goode lived with his sister in a little cottage beside the bridge and a former Chief Constable used to have a garden there. Mrs Robson loved to sit in the garden beside the boatman's house 39 08 05

1888 09 14

Much debate about proposal to build new bridge (Victoria Bridge) to link Cambridge & Chesterton (which would open the way for the amalgamation of Chesterton Urban District into Cambridge)  
[1.16]

1888 09 21

"People of Chesterton have got Cambridge people to pay half the expense of the Victoria Bridge"  
[1.17]

1888 11 02

Poll approves Victoria Bridge proposal by 2,784 to 1,754; apply for Act of Parliament to authorise construction of this and a second bridge further downstream [1.18]

1889 08 03

Sir – The Mill Road footbridge over the railway line was opened to the public on Monday August 3<sup>rd</sup> 1889. I was the last one to take the keys of the gates to the station – William Nelson. Sir - The iron footbridge over the railway on Mill Road had wooden steps and gave access to the open fields beyond it. In fact, so countrified was the area that when the Royal Standard was built it was known as ‘Apthorpe’s Folly’ from William Apthorpe the brewer who built it. The bridge now stands on Coldham Common where it spans the Newmarket Line – H.D.C. 35 01 26[1.8]

Mill Road Railway Bridge was built in 1889 and Percy North, the well-known chiropodist, remembers playing under the bridge arches when they were being constructed. There was a level crossing over the railway then but it was not much used because there was hardly any traffic. There was nothing beyond, Great Eastern Street and Argyle Street were just ballast pits for the railway and the only house was a large one where the Broadway stands today, he recalls. 60 08 06 & a

1889 09 20

Victoria Bridge: operations have just been commenced in connection with the construction of the first of the bridges authorised by the Cam Bridges Act. Engineers: Messrs J.J. Webster (Liverpool) and F. Waters (Cambridge), Contractor: John Mackay of Hereford. The bridge to be erected opposite to Bridge Road and will be approached from the Cambridge side by a road across Midsummer Common. The contractor has agreed to complete the undertaking in ten months. A number of townsmen have been engaged and local materials such as pipes are being used. 1889 09 20 Ch

1889 11 08

Victoria Bridge: Laying the foundation stone. The bridge will have a superstructure of iron and steel, principally six elliptical main ribs spanning the river. The main rib will be 100 feet, clear span with a clear rise above the water of 14ft 6inches. The will consider of wrought iron plate and angle iron and will be so designed that with two traction engines in the centre of the bridge, and the whole span covered with passengers the metal will not in any part of the structure be submitted to a greater test than five tons per square inch in compression. The extreme length of the bridge is to be 40 feet with two footways of seven feet wide each and a roadway of 26 feet – ample room for the two widest vehicles to pass with ease. The new connecting road across the common is to be 40 feet wide with footways seven feet wide and granite tarmacadam. The cost will be under £10,000. The foundation stone was laid by the Mayor (F. Wace) and J. Bester, Chairman of the Chesterton Local Board 1899 11 08

1890 12 11

Victoria Bridge opens, December [1.2]

1892

‘High Back’ bridge at Jesus lock replaced by more convenient design

1893

Petition for another bridge across river at Abbey road [NI.3.20]

1897

1897-8 the sum of £411 15s was paid for Robinson Crusoe Bridge. 39 08 05

1897 08 09

Sir - Now that the Jubilee accounts have been reckoned up it seems fitting we should start afresh the matter of the new bridge. The question of a new bridge to connect Chesterton with Cambridge at the Abbey Estate is of supreme importance. The ferryman knows no rest. All the people at Old Chesterton have to be crossed over long before the omnibuses are astir. The wheels of progress anywhere in the vicinity have moved round in the past with about the same velocity as a farmer's cart!. Is this to drag

on for ever?. The advantage of another bridge over the now-sweetened Cam would be a great gain to both Chesterton and Cambridge in equal proportion - letter signed "Chestertonian 1897 08 09

1898 04 02

Sir - the new bridge at Abbey Road Cambridge has become a supreme necessity. Everyone admits it now. Boats and punts have had their day, and should be done away with. Omnibuses of first class order are unable to carry people to most convenient places, and at low prices, for the want of another bridge to bring them into Cambridge. What enormous advantages to both Chesterton and Cambridge another bridge at this spot holds out. The great increase in traffic calls loudly for another bridge. The people near the Abbey again insisted upon another bridge but the Cambridge Rip Van Winkles sleep on, oblivious of anything. Procrastination is the great curse of Cambridge, and Chesterton should take warning by keeping abreast with the requirements of this important suburb – Chestertonian 1898 04 02

1899 07 11

Sir – The population of Chesterton is mainly composed of people who have been turned out of Cambridge to make way for college and other improvements, and nearly all are employed in that ancient town. Every day brings evidence of the great need of another crossing of the Cam & that Abbey Road is the place goes without saying. The De Freville Estate, are absolutely dependent upon the old punts and other obsolete marine structures for crossing over to Cambridge. . It must be conceded that a bridge over this part of the Cam is of the highest importance – “Chestertonian” - 1899 07 11

## **1900**

1901 08 07

A proposal to erect a new footbridge over the Cam between the De Freville Estate and Cambridge was advanced at a meeting of occupiers. It would put them in more direct communication with Fitzroy Street. A member of Chesterton Urban District Council thought it should be erected at the Fort St George ferry to benefit the owners of the new Central Estate; but this was a thing of the future. If they waited for this development they might wait five or ten years. They wanted a bridge for De Freville inhabitants immediately and would circulate residents for donations 01 08 07

1902 03 22

Sir – A beautiful permanent memorial of the Coronation year would be the building of a bridge at De Freville Avenue. The Avenue is planted with elm trees on each side, the houses are all substantially, and some very tastefully, built; they are all set back and have flower gardens in front, making a very attractive approach to the proposed new bridge. It would provide a safe road for children attending the best Cambridge schools and provide the nearest way to Newmarket Road and the Railway Station, thus benefiting labourers, working men, college servants etc. The more bridges there are built over the river the more surely you bind communities together to the advantage of both Cambridge and Chesterton – F.R. Leach CDN 1902 03 22

1904 10 17

Moves to annul clause re new road bridge, poll opposes bridge & traffic it would cause; committee report favours Walnut Tree Avenue as best site at cost £20,000 [2.7]

1904 11 19

No reasonable person expects to find a ferryman on duty after ten at night and is reconciled to the necessity of grinding himself across the few yards of water. About midnight a husband and his wife returning from Chesterton determined to make a short cut across the river as rain was pouring down in pitiless fashion. The husband seized the handle of the grind to get to the other side as quickly as possible. But when they got to the middle the ferry stuck fast, nor would it go back no matter how hard he strained and pushed. For ten minutes they wrestled with that ferry in the pouring rain and were just about to shout for help when the unwieldy affair began to work and they got back to the

bank they had left. As they walked around the road home they decided that ferries were contrivances of the Evil One CDN 19.11.1904

1904 12 08

Chesterton council considered a petition for the construction of a footbridge across the Cam between Victoria Bridge and Dant's Ferry, subject to £200 being raised by private subscription towards the cost. But by asking for a subscription they would be setting a precedent and they would never be able to carry out public improvements without asking local occupiers to put their hands in their pockets to help them. It would be an advantage to those on the De Freville, but they all paid rates. The bridge would be an advantage, but not a pecuniary one. If it was placed at the Fort St George it would benefit a very large number of people and no ratepayer would object to a farthing rate for the project CDN 8.12.1904 [2.2]

1904 12 23

P.C. Winter told an inquest that he went to Dant's Ferry and found a body in the water fully dressed with the head towards Victoria Bridge and the feet under the ferry boat. He raised the head out of the water but the body was caught in the chains and he could not lift it. The Coroner said that a bridge instead of a ferry would probably be better and the number of accidents would be less. The ferry boat was a private concern, people paid tuppence a week and pulled themselves across early in the morning or late at night. There was no blame, it was one of those unfortunate circumstances which had happened at the same spot before. CDN 23.12.1904

1905 01 26

Cambridge councillors were told of a fatal accident at Dant's Ferry a few days prior to Christmas when the breadwinner of a family was drowned. It was only one of many; during the present winter at least five persons had tumbled into the water at that spot. There should be a bridge in the neighbourhood of Abbey Road. But Victoria Bridge was not a long way from Dant's Ferry and before any bridges were built Chesterton would have to join Cambridge. 05 01 26

1905 02 23

A meeting of Chestertonians was held in furtherance of the scheme for constructing a bridge across the Cam at the Fort St George. The Council has accepted the necessity of a bridge and will spend £500 provided another £200 is raised by private subscription. It was not a large sum for such a district. Inhabitants should remember that once it was built they would save further expense on ferries. Several promises were made on the spot and various college boat clubs will be approached. 05 02 23a

1905 06 12

The sinister hand of Death has cast its shadow over Cambridge in its most joyous mood. In the very midst of the May Week holiday three people were drowned through the capsizing of the ferryboat known as the Red Grind at Fen Ditton. Two journeys had been made after the racing, the ferry crowded each time and when the boat was ready for the third about 20 people commenced the fateful voyage. Two University men jumped on at the last moment, the ferry gave a lurch and turned turtle pitching the screaming occupants into six feet of water. Words cannot describe the scene at Fen Ditton when the ferry sank. People in the grounds of the Plough rushed to the bank, one or two men plunged into the water, others seized chairs and hurled them towards the struggling mass in the river. Pleasure boats hurried and scurried in answer to frantic appeals for help and the Ditton men shoved off in their black fishing boats. Off the twenty or so who went down with the ferry all but three were saved. Miss Violet Handscombe was engaged to Mr Thomas Day and together they enjoyed a visit to the May races. From the Plough pleasure gardens they stepped aboard the ill-fated Red Grind ferry. When it sank Mr Day became separated from his intended bride and managed to reach the bank unassisted. Eagerly he looked for his betrothed but she had become entangled with the rail when the ferry capsized; he plunged into the river again and brought her to dry land but she had been so long under water that life was extinct. Miss Minnie Murkin is the central figure of the Fen Ditton ferry sinking. Today she was to have been a happy bride but now her body will be borne to the tomb. At her

home in Selwyn Terrace the last few days have witnessed all the preliminary events that precede the wedding; presents have been arriving and her finance came from Swansea. He was on the bank, witnessed the upsetting of the boat and endured the agony of seeing his prospective bride dragged beneath the surface by the sinking craft. 05 06 12, a-c [1.3]

1905 06 13

The inquests on the three victims of the ferry sinking was opened in Fen Ditton schoolroom. The jury proceeded to the melancholy task of viewing the bodies. Those of Mrs Annie Thompson and Miss Minnie Murkin were laid side by side in a darkened room at the Plough, attired in white as for burial, and awaiting outside were the coffins. They then proceeded to a house in which Miss Handscombe was already laid in her coffin. Next they viewed the boat which had been raised from the river. 05 06 13a

1905 07 17

Licensing magistrates were told that the old ferry at the Plough, Fen Ditton, scene of the tragic sinking, would not be used again and a new boat would be obtained. The old tenant had no knowledge of boats but the new one was a lighterman by trade and understood the workings of a ferry. The old ferry was a 'death trap' and the new one must be a safe one and competent to carry passengers. 05 07 17a

1905 12 08

Proposed footbridge Fort St George – 05 12 07

1905 12 12

Mr Thomas Day, whose sweetheart, Miss Violet Handscombe, was one of the victims of the Fen Ditton Red Grind ferry disaster, has died in Addenbrooke's Hospital aged 25. He was with her on the ferry when it upset and they became separated. He reached the bank, then plunged back into the river and found her, but she later died. The shock had a detrimental effect on his physical condition and when he was attacked with illness quickly succumbed. He died of bronchial pneumonia and rupture of the lungs. 05 12 12

1909 12 24

New bye-laws relating to the illumination of chain ferry boats and barges after dark were adopted. CWN 09 12 24

## **1910**

1910 05 27

A Trinity College undergraduate was summoned for riding a motor cycle on the footway in Garret Hostel Lane. P.S. Merry said there were about 100 people on the bridge watching the boats when defendant rode down the lane and, without sounding his horn, went through the posts on to the bridge at a speed of five miles an hour. It was a public footpath and even if police had not prosecuted cyclists before, there was no reason why they should not if necessary. The lad said police had seen him do it before and he'd since asked at the Police Station and been told it was all right. The case was dismissed. 10 05 27b

1910 07 08

Ferry boats to be lighted – 10 07 08c

1911 04 07

Upware Ferry. At a meeting of County School Attendance Committee a letter was received from Mr Benjamin Read stating that he had obtained a new boat for ferrying the children across the river at Upware and asking that the payment to him might be increased from £6 to £8 per annum. Seven-tenths of the cost will be charged to the parish of Waterbeach 11 04 07

1911 11 03

Cambridge Town Council wanted Victoria Bridge and its approaches to be declared a main road and maintained by the County Council. But they did not agree: the Bridge had been built under an Act of Parliament at the expense of Chesterton UDC and Cambridge Town Council. After the bridge was built Victoria Avenue had been declared and made a main road. But there was already a main road from Chesterton to Cambridge via Magdalene Street and over the Great Bridge 11 11 03i & j

1912 03 01

The bridge over the brook at Burrell's Walk should be replaced with one a foot higher so as to prevent it being covered with water in time of flood. A post should be placed at each end to compel cyclists who rode over it to do so at a moderate pace, councillors heard. But this was a waste of money: it only flooded once every five years and it was only a short diversion to come down by the tennis court. The scheme was dropped. 12 03 01a

1912 04 13

Borough ordered to build new road bridge as part of provisions of Local Government Board Extension Order [2.3]

1912 05 17

Councillors should consider a footbridge over the river near the Fort St George ferry. If anyone saw the large amount of people who passed over the ferries and the waste of time entailed they would agree that a bridge was most desirable. The system was antiquated and in times of flood they had to rely on Victoria Bridge only. Last winter when the river was running high, the custodian had chained the ferry up to the lamp post. There had been a sum of money guaranteed when it was proposed to put the bridge opposite the end of De Freville Avenue. But the scheme fell through because of the large sum required to purchase the land to get through Jesus College boat yard. – 12 05 17c & d

1913 06 13

Two sites were considered for the erection of a footbridge over the river; one at Ferry Path and the other at Pretoria Road. It was undesirable to land the steps of the bridge at the front door of the Fort St George public house – however welcome that might be to the landlord. In addition Ferry Path landowners demanded a great deal of money for a strip of land to give access. The Pretoria Road site could not be as expensive so councillors agreed to a bridge 8ft 6inches wide there 13 06 13 p7 CIP

1913 06 14

Borough decide that a bridge to replace Fort St George ferry is now necessity (have discussed it for 25 years). Annual revenue from ferry is £100 after expenses, causes delays to people wishing to cross & when ferryman not on duty need to pull it to their side of bank using damp & weedy chain. Will cost £1-2,000 [2.4]

1914 03 20

There is a great need for a footbridge across the Cam near Snob's Point, a meeting heard. It would open up one of the finest rambles and be the nearest route to the railway station. But it would interfere with the ladies' bathing place; there would be such publicity they would have to shift it. And they already had one footbridge and if they wanted the area developed they must have a road bridge 14 03 20b

1914 04 10

Chesterton need for new traffic bridge, footbridge Ferry Path or Pretoria Road – 14 04 10c, e

1914 05 08

The Cam Conservators were told that if they relaid the floor of Jesus Green Bridge in reinforced concrete, the council would pay half the cost. It had been put up to replace an old wooden bridge. There was formerly a lock and weir at Fort St George, and a bridge there. When the lock was moved to Jesus Green the liability attached to the old bridge was moved on to the new bridge. There was a

public right of way over the bridge and the Conservators thought it more convenient to build an iron bridge 14 05 08

1914 08 14

Tom Jolley acted as ferryman at Caron's Ferry at the Pike & Eel, Old Chesterton for 39 years. The ferry is a small punt boat near the larger ferry and is used by members of the University boat clubs who pay the ferryman a termly allowance. It was worked by his father and grandfather before him. Mr Jolley was universally known as 'Caron' and his cheery good nature made him a great favourite. 14 08 14 p4

1914 10 23

Under the 1912 boundary extension proposals Cambridge had to erect a bridge over the Cam to Chesterton within five years. Walnut Tree Avenue was the best site but whether this was the best time was a matter of debate. An Inspector from London had told them what they had to do and it was now the Law of the Land. Chesterton people had voted against it - in fact nobody wanted it. The only way to overturn the order was by going through all the expense of obtaining another Act of Parliament. 14 10 23

1919 02 05

Heavy snowfall, Garret Hostel bridge – many more people have passed over this bridge during the past four years on their way to First Eastern General Hospital than throughout the whole of its previous existence – 19 02 05c

## **1920**

1924 12 04

Progress is being made in connection with the erection of a bridge over the river at Chesterton but the Surveyor is overwhelmed with work. It is two or three years ago when the owner of the land necessary for the proposed bridge at Pretoria road said he was willing to sell the land at a reasonable price. Over 800 people had paid for season tickets to go over the ferry and the council got something like 25s a week in odd halfpennies for casual passengers. 24 12 04

1924 12 06

The Town Clerk reported the receipt of a petition against the erection of a bridge over the river at Walnut Tree Avenue, Cambridge. It stated that the present extensive outlook of considerable beauty across the Commons was much appreciated by the residents and this would be practically eliminated by the approach to the proposed bridge. The value of property would be considerably depreciated 24 12 06

1925 09 24

Coun Porter said councillors might not realise what an old crock the ferry over the Cam at Chesterton was. When one went over in rough weather the water had to be baled out and the sides of the ferry shook. At the time of the fair the ferryman would not risk taking over a crowd of people because it was so dangerous. Children were taking a very great risk in using the ferry and the council taking the greatest risk of all in not taking steps to prevent somebody being drowned. The ferry was obsolete, it should be condemned at once and done away with 25 09 24

1925 10 22

There was another 'battle of the bridges' at Cambridge Town Council when the question of the erection of bridges across the Cam was brought forward. With the opening up of Mill Road there were people who only got ten minutes home to dinner owing to delay at the ferry. The Paving committee recommended that the footbridge at Pretoria Road be proceeded with and that a temporary footbridge be erected at Dant's Ferry pending construction of a vehicular bridge. It was dangerous to go over Victoria Bridge and they must have a new vehicular bridge if only to modify that danger 25 10 22

1926 12 02

The official testing took place of the bridges along the new road through Coe Fen, The Fen Causeway. They are Snobbs' Bridge, Flood Water Bridge and the River Bridge. The last is the most important and five steam rollers and one steam tractor, together weighing 63 tons were driven across it, passing each other, thus making 63 tons rolling weight, equivalent to about 100 tons dead weight. The Cambridge Borough Surveyor and councillors boarded a punt and viewed the deflectometer under the bridge, which gave a satisfactory reading. The foundations consist of 100 piles of 40 feet length, weighing about four tons each 26 12 02

1926 12 09

Fen Causeway, the new and important link between Newnham and the rest of Cambridge, was opened by the Mayor. The bridge and its approaches were gaily decorated with bunting and presented a colourful scene. The project of relieving Silver Street traffic had started as long ago as 1904 and discussion had gone on for nearly 20 years before the Town Council approved the plan in 1923. Nine proposals had been put forward and had it not been for the urgency of the unemployment question the same position would have existed today, only instead of nine there might have been nineteen different schemes (Laughter) 26 12 09

1927 04 08

The Cam Conservators reported they had got the Fort St George ferry up, but it sank again. It was impossible to do anything with the boat and impossible to get another one. They had agreed to employ a man to do the work but could not undertake the risk. At lunchtime too many people crowded on to the boat and a man could not order them off. The Conservators had carried on the ferry at a loss for years. They had a contract to take the people across the water and had to do something. Chesterton people felt they had been badly treated. 27 04 08

1927 07 23

New footbridge opened at Dant's Ferry, near Walnut Tree Avenue. There was a good deal of grouching before the inhabitants of Chesterton had a footbridge over the Cam at Dant's Ferry. Now they have got one they have found something else to grouse about. At five minutes to eight every morning the instrument workers at Pye's are hurrying to work from the other side of the river. They curse and groan, trip and stagger under the burden of carrying their bicycles up and down a steep double flight of steps. Sooner or later some panting person carrying a bicycle will fall backwards or pitch into the river. The bridge was not made for cyclists who should get up earlier and ride up Victoria Avenue. 27 07 23.

1927 09 03

Chesterton folk looked very happy at the opening of the Pretoria Road footbridge and there was a fairly large crowd on both sides of the river. The bridge has been a very long time coming. There is an old proverb: "Bridges were made for wise men to walk over, and fools to ride over". Cyclists should remember this and the warning of the penalties awaiting those who do not dismount when crossing the bridge. 27 09 03 [1.12, 1.15]

1928 04 13

Sir – I protest against the ejection of Mr Pauley and his family from the ferry house, Midsummer Common. They have done their best to find a house but without success. The man and his son worked the ferry over the river, night and day, including Sundays, and in all weathers for the convenience of the Cambridge ratepayers, thus filling one of the most monotonous jobs; the man for 35 years and the boy for 16. On the completion of the footbridge they are completely cast over, no compensation being paid and no pension. To send people adrift in this matter is neither a moral or Christian act – Charles Porter. 28 04 13

1929

Motor car crashes through railings of Magdalene Bridge & hangs over river



1929 07 13

Dant's ferry footbridge and bicycles – 29 07 13

### **1930**

1930 04 28

The railway came to Cambridge in 1845 and was carried onwards to Ely by a trestle bridge; this was replaced by a low girder bridge until April 1930 when crowds descended to witness its replacement by a much larger and stronger bridge. The operation was a spectacular one, commencing at midnight engineers worked in the light of white acetylene flames to cut the steelwork in the centre of the old bridge and remove the track at either end. It was then raised on hydraulic jacks before being removed. Then the new bridge which had already been erected alongside was carefully moved into place, the lines reconnected and all was ready for trains to run again. 30 04 28

1930 12 12

The 'skeleton' of the Chesterton vehicular bridge came out of the municipal cupboard. It had been suggested when Victoria Bridge had been erected but the council subsequently rejected the proposals. In the meantime a temporary bridge had been erected at Dant's Ferry with the intention of moving it towards the Pike and Eel. Now it will be kept in the present position and lowered to make it easier to cross with perambulators. But it was a shame to spend £1,600 on a structure which had not been right when it was put up. 30 12 12c

1932 02 17

Back to the Ferry – Dant's ferry being used again while approaches to footbridge reconstructed – photo – 32 02 17 [CIP 19.2.32p12]

1935 05 17

Cambridge University and Town Gas Light Company needed to lay a main from their works in Newmarket Road to Cam Road. The first proposal was to lay it under the river but negotiations were opened with a view to the erection of a footbridge which would serve the Company and also meet the growing needs of the residents in the neighbourhood. The cost would be £4,000 of which the Gas Company offered to pay a quarter providing the skeleton of the bridge was provided during this financial year 35 05 17

1935 08 24

Laying foundation for new bridge over Cam on site of Horse Grind Ferry – photo – 35 08 24

1935 08 27

Widening Long Road railway bridge – photo – 35 08 27a

1935 11 09

Horse Grind Ferry going – will be replaced by bridge – photo - 35 11 09a

1935 11 25

Horse Grind ferry bridge nears completion – photo 35 11 25

1936 03 03

Long Road new railway bridge – photo – 36 03 03

1936 04 27

New bridge replacing old ferry at Horse Grind is now in use – photo – 36 04 27 [1.1]

1936 07 31

The High Back Bridge at Jesus Lock was 40 years old and not designed for prams. Recently two little children were trying to push one across when it overturned and the baby was thrown out. However

they were getting less bulky and when one of the heavier prams came along people were not backward in giving a helping hand. A long sloping ramp would be very detrimental to the quaint old lock and increase the danger from cyclists. The Surveyor was instructed to provide two cycle ramps on the steps on Jesus Green side of the bridge 36 07 31

1938 06 22

Queens' College have to underpin the foundations of the Essex Buildings and may rebuild it further from the road instead of on its present alignment. They asked whether the Corporation wished to acquire the land released and expedite the rebuilding of Silver Street bridge. This could be widened to 40 feet instead of 28 feet as present. The erection of new college buildings and the construction of the bridge would proceed at the same time with the bridge completed by October 1939 38 06 22

1938 07 27

Silver Street Bridge was at present 21ft 6ins wide. Some years ago the Council bought land on the south side to enable it to be increased to 28ft when re-building was done. But it was unnecessary to increase it to 40ft as the road beside the old buildings of Queens' College could not be widened. Now the college wanted to redevelop and had offered land provided the bridge was widened – 38 07 23a & b. Borough council decide to apply for funding – 38 07 27

1938 08 27

The foundation of Silver Street Bridge, built about 1850 has been partially washed away by the rush of water from the King's Mill sluice, a diver underpinning Queens' College discovered. The Cambridge Borough Survey donned a diving suit and personally inspected the damage. There is no danger of it collapsing yet but as a precaution buses and heavy lorries will be banned. For many years heavy vehicles have been limited to a speed of five mph. In June the Council adopted a scheme to construct a new one by acquiring land from the college. But the County Council opposed it. 38 08 27

1939 06 09

Clayhithe's New Bridge which has superseded the old toll bridge, was formally opened. The first vehicle which crossed over the bridge after the opening was a pony and trap driven by Ald. Francis. 39 06 09 CIPof

1939 07 22

Silver Street bridge new design, dispute between Cambridge and county – 39 07 22a

## **1940**

1940 05 04

Silver Street Bridge closed to buses as foundations unsafe – 40 05 04b

## **1950**

1953 07 27

Cambridge Police have issued a warning that it is essential in the public interest that there be strict compliance with the order prohibiting vehicles whose weight exceeds two tons from using Silver Street Bridge. They particularly seek the co-operation of road users making deliveries to premises in Silver Street and suggest that whenever possible light vans only should be used. Failure to observe the Order renders the person concerned liable to prosecution.

1953 10 13

Magdalene Bridge restricted to 12 tons [1.13]

1956 06 12

Territorial Army sappers erected a bridge across the Cam to act as a substitute for the Jesus Green footbridge which is temporally closed for repairs. A large crowd watched them build the floating bays

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made up of folding boats, road bearers and decking. The folding boat equipment bridge is normally used by 3-ton military lorries but the City Surveyor has added additional handrails for public use. 56 06 12

1956 07 30

Robinson Crusoe footbridge linking Sheep's Green with Coe Fen was built years before Fen Causeway Bridge and was then the only way across the river. But it was now structurally unsound and should be closed. Coun A.C. Taylor said he once used it three times a week to go to the Sheep's Green bathing shed but now few people knew where it was; Coun Mrs Henn said she'd lived in the area for 30 years and never had occasion to use it. 56 07 30 [1.14]

1958 08 02

Silver Street bridge demolished, temporary bridge erected while rebuilding takes place (reopened August 1959) – 58 08 02a [1.22,1.24]

1958 12 19

Traffic over Hills Road railway bridge, a bottleneck on the principal road into Cambridge, is extremely heavy. Visibility over the summit is severely restricted and many accidents have occurred there. The existing steel plate girder bridge has deteriorated with age and now work will start to provide a new twin two-lane carriageways and footpaths. The new bridge will be designed to allow for widening should additional railway tracks be needed in the future 58 12 19b

1959 03 20

Silver Street bridge open to traffic – 59 03 20d

1959 08 12

Hills Road railway bridge reconstructed [CDN12.8.59p9]

1959 08 14

The new Silver Street Bridge is now fully open and there can be no doubt it is an exceptionally handsome piece of work. But after traffic had been admitted it was reduced to a single line again, pumps were sent for, coffer dams sunk and the word went round that all was not well. Rumours said that contractors had discovered an underground cavity, the bridge was sinking and that concrete was having to be pumped in. The County Surveyor cancelled a meeting with the press but a councillor said it was normal settlement and there was nothing wrong. 59 08 14d [3.7]

1959 10 16

More traffic went along Newmarket Road than any other and congestion often occurred at Four Lamps Corner. Any small incident – circuses on the Common or even May Balls - holds up traffic. Victoria Bridge vibrated when heavy vehicles had to stand on it with their engines running. We need a new bridge over the river at Walnut Tree Avenue. But a temporary bridge could be thrown over the Cam in six months by using the site of the old horse ferry next to the Chesterton footbridge. There would be a natural route for traffic up Garlic Row, Ald Symonds said. 59 10 16a & b

1959 11 21

An anonymous gentleman has offered to fund a new bridge across the Cam at Garret Hostel Lane. It will have a span of 15 feet greater than the present one and the height above water level will be increased by five feet. The current bridge is a Victorian cast iron structure painted green beneath which various pipes and cables are slung in a manner out of keeping with this part of the river. 59 11 21c

***1960s The Cambridgeshire Collection has detailed newspaper cuttings files from this date***

1960 03 11

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The City Council is to pressure the Ministry of Transport about the proposed new bridge over the river at Chesterton. The route was approved four years ago and both Messrs Pye and Marshalls – the two large employers of labour in the area – consider it to be a matter of urgency. But the Mitcham's Corner improvement scheme would be relatively inexpensive and was being forced on them by the Government. This would further delay the proposals to provide a complete bypass on the Chesterton route. 60 03 11

1960 06 21

It took twenty men twenty hours at the week-end to demolish Cambridge's old Hills Road Bridge – twice as long as the contractors had anticipated. Originally it was thought that the removal of 140 tons of steel girders would take a little over eight hours, but the trains passing underneath proved a little more troublesome than expected. The men took advantage of the frequent breaks to wipe the sweat from their brows and light a cigarette. The scene resembled firework night for, as the oxyacetylene guns cut through the girders, a spray of red hot sparks would fall on the ground giving an impression of a 'golden rain' 60 06 21

1960 10 24

New Garret Hostel bridge opened, the gift of the Trusted family; history – 60 10 24 [1.25,1.27]

1960 12 02

The steepness of the new Garret Hostel Bridge brings complaints, muffled in puffs and pantings, from cyclists, pedestrians and pram-pushers. A gentleman made his laborious way, pulling himself up the slope with the help of the elegant bronze balustrade. A lady, pushing her cycle loaded with laundry in the front basket, exclaimed "Horrible bridge it is now, isn't it". Another added "If it gets ice on it in winter it will be worse still". In fact the council have already been putting grit on the bridge to combat the early frost on its surface. But, as one woman remarked, "There's nothing they can do about it now, of course" 60 12 02

1960 12 17

Hills Road Railway Bridge is functioning almost as normal again. After a year's work during which the traffic has had to contend with considerable difficulties, the road is now suitable for two-lane traffic. Resurfacing will not be carried on for another 12 months in order to allow the sufficient subsidence of the present structure and for several more weeks workmen will be patching up. Work on Churchill College continues as does work on 13 three-storey terrace houses and 60 maisonettes at East Road. Most have their roofs on and one block of houses has its windows in. 60 12 17b

1961 03 10

Dozens of people were thrown into the fast flowing River Cam on Saturday afternoon when the ferry at Fen Ditton suddenly sank. Undergraduates who were watching the Lent Bumps plunged into the water to help the men, women and children who were striking out for the bank. Several were taken into nearby public houses where medical students assisted them and two people went to Addenbrooke's Hospital suffering from shock 61 03 06 Inquiry – 61 03 10d

1961 04 06

Steps are being taken to prevent another accident on the river ferry at The Plough public house, Fen Ditton. Police will ensure that no more than 20 people board the boat at once and Whitbread's brewery will erect removable crush barriers during race weeks to control crowds. The accident happened when one man tried to jump on the ferry as another jumped off. The balance of the boat was upset and it began rocking in the water. At the time the police had been called away to sort out a serious traffic tangle in the village. 61 04 06

1961 06 07

The ferry across the River Cam at Fen Ditton has been removed for the rest of the current boating season by its owners, Whitbread's Brewery, in the interest of public safety. A few weeks ago, at the end of the University Lent bumping races, the chain operated ferry sank throwing more than 30

people into the water. Known to University students as the 'Red Grind' because of its bright colouring it has been part of the Cambridge river scene for many years 61 06 07

1961 07 01

Permission to build a temporary Bailey Bridge over the River Cam at Chesterton has been refused. The Minister appreciates the council's desire to reduce the amount of cross river traffic using the Victoria Avenue – Victoria Bridge route but it would attract additional vehicles through narrow and tortuous roads. Proposals to restrict the bridge to local traffic and impose weight restrictions to prevent its use by heavy lorries would not work, he says. Now the Council will proceed with plans for a new permanent bridge 61 07 01

1961 10 05

The River Cam Conservators will approach Whitbread's to try and bring back the ferry that connected the grounds of 'The Plough' at Fen Ditton with the opposite river bank. After the ferry overturned last March, throwing many people into the water, the brewery considered erecting safety barriers on the bank but then decided to remove the boat altogether. It was later taken to Ely 61 10 05c

1962 04 11

Dant's Ferry, memories and 'Cuckoo' Dant – 62 04 11b

1963 09 13

New barriers have been erected on the Green Dragon Bridge, Chesterton in a bid to stop cattle and motor cyclists using it to cross the river. But it is now difficult to get coach-built prams through – they certainly won't get under with the hoods up. If the posts were further apart, cattle would get past, the council says. Motor cycles and scooters are officially prohibited from the bridge but there is no objection to pedal and motor-assisted cycles provided they are pushed across. 63 09 13d

1965 05 17

Minister of Transport to authorise the building of the Chesterton Bridge Route (Elizabeth Way) following public inquiry – 65 05 17

1967 06 28

Magdalene Bridge found to have a two-inch sag; closed to buses and heavy lorries for at least a year while repairs carried out – 67 06 28a. (New bridge proposed 1968. Ministry 'to replace in 1971'.)

1968 11 25

Three-wheel car hung under Bridge of Sighs – details – 68 11 25a

1969 06 24

Walnut Tree Avenue site for storage equipment for construction Elizabeth Bridge; Banham's boatyard has moved to new premises, ferry remains – 69 06 24

1969 07 10

Elizabeth Bridge engineering problems – feature – 69 07 10

1969 11 04

Magdalene Bridge to be replaced with present cast-iron structure replaced with 'a simple modern design', says Ministry – 69 11 04

1969 11 20

Tunnellers prepare for Elizabeth Bridge, divert pipes underground – profile – 69 11 20

## **1970**

1970 03 13

Elizabeth Bridge last concrete span fixed in place – 70 03 13a

1970 11 04

Magdalene Bridge should be demolished and replaced say Ministry of Transport but opposition likely – photo of proposals – 70 11 04

1971

Magdalene Bridge inquiry 1971, to be preserved 1972,

1971 07 06

Queens' College apply for new footbridge over Cam between Mathematical Bridge and King's; would allow access to proposed new building- 71 07 06

1971 07 13

Elizabeth Bridge and approach roads opened by Lord Butler. It included a major approach road from Milton Road to Newmarket Road with roundabout on Chesterton Road which completely transformed Hawthorn Way, Cam Road, Haig Road and Walnut Tree Avenue – 71 07 13; review feature – 71 07 13a, b, c, d; complaints – 71 07 15a. 1971 07 13. Initially Speeds traffic 'like motoring on Sunday morning' – 71 07 14. Brings problems people living beside it – 71 07 15 complaints – 71 07 15a. 21,000 vehicles use per day 71 09 22 [8.9]

1972 06 14

Cambridge's famous Magdalene Bridge is to be preserved, the Secretary for the Environment, Mr Peter Walker, has decided. His move follows last year's public inquiry into proposals by his Department to knock down and replace the 148-year-old bridge. Mr Walker has ruled that the bridge should be strengthened internally and that a temporary bridge should be provided alongside while work is going on, p18

1978 06 15

The 150-year-old Magdalene Bridge in Cambridge is in grave danger of collapsing, councillors were told. For the last 11 years there has been a three-ton vehicle restriction but sometimes the inter-continental 'juggernaut' lorries travelling through the city take a wrong turning and pass over the bridge. Now the abutments, which support the bridge at both ends, are moving apart and if this continues it could eventually break its back. Plans were made to rebuild the bridge but environmentalists objected and at a public inquiry it was decided the bridge should be strengthened, retaining its present appearance. But Government engineers came up against insuperable technical problems in the use of the cast-iron parapets and have suggested cast-steel instead. 78 06 15

1979 11 02

County council engineers have devised a new method to strengthen the 150-year-old Magdalene Bridge in Cambridge without altering its appearance. If Government finances permit work will start in July, more than 13 years after the bridge was closed to buses and other heavy traffic because of its unsound condition. The rebuilding has been surrounded by controversy since cracks were detected in the under-structure. A public inquiry in 1971 agreed that the new bridge should resemble the old one as far as possible but a long wrangle developed over the appearance and complex legal issues were involved because it is an ancient structure.

**1980**

1981 03 10

Magdalene Bridge to be strengthened; Bailey Bridge erected alongside – [3.5]

1982 12

Magdalene Bridge reopens, costs had risen from £50,000 to £545,000 [3.5]

1986 06 13

Victoria Bridge is rusting away. The 97-year old structure has taken a battering from heavy vehicles over the years, despite a lorry ban and weight limit. It is in such a bad state of repair that it needs to be entirely rebuilt – a project which will cause chaos for 18 months. Engineers hope to keep traffic moving by repairing half the bridge at a time. All the county's other 2,000 bridges are also being inspected 86 06 13

1989 11 28

New cycle bridge - longest of type in Western Europe opens 28.11.89

1990 08 24

Trinity College erect Bailey bridge across river during underground extension to college library – 90 08 24a

1990 07 27

Victoria Bridge refurbishment plan – 90 07 27a

1990 08 18

Victoria Bridge restoration to start – 90 08 18a

1990 09 14

Victoria Bridge girders revealed during rebuilding – 90 09 14a